

## PROFILE

From April 2006 URBED will evolve into two companies; *URBED (Urban and economic development)* based in London and *URBED (Urbanism, Environment and Design)* based in Manchester. Both remain linked by the URBED Trust that will promote research and publications reflecting URBED's values. Both companies will work nationally and indeed internationally with the London company concentrating on research and consultancy in economic development and capacity building while the Manchester office develops its work on masterplanning, sustainability and community participation through everything from research to consultancy and masterplanning.

## Evolution

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From its origins in the vacant Covent Garden of the 1970s URBED's concern has been to address the problems affecting urban areas. We have always been more than urban designers or regeneration consultants. Our concern has been to create urban areas that are sustainable socially, economically and environmentally something that URBED promoted in the 1990s through the Sustainable Urban Neighbourhood (SUN) Initiative. Today these concerns have come to be known as the Urban Renaissance, they are something that URBED has been doing for almost 30 years.

For many years the focus of URBED's work was the regeneration of rundown industrial areas such as the Jewellery Quarter in Birmingham and Little Germany in Bradford – both won BURA Regeneration awards. However, in the 1990s it became increasingly clear that the problem was not the occasional tear in the urban

fabric but rather something more fundamental in the economic and social dynamic of the UK's urban areas. URBED's work since then has focused on addressing these issues through research, consultancy work for local authorities and masterplans for private developers. Most of this work has involved both offices. However the work areas below are those managed and largely undertaken by the Manchester office:

**Research work:** URBED has produced a range of research reports, starting with the ground breaking reports *Building to Last* for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and *Tomorrow: A peaceful path to urban reform* for Friends of the Earth. Both of these were used by the Urban Task Force and URBED went on to produce a report for the Task Force called *But would you live there?* This work has since been pulled together into a book published by the Butterworth Heinemann called *Building the 21st Century Home*. More recently URBED has produced a guide to sustainable suburbs *A city of Villages* for the GLA and *Biodiversity by Design* a guide to ecological urban design for the TCPA.

**Consultancy:** Over the years URBED has done a wide range of consultancy work from strategies for small market towns to masterplans for large cities. Recent studies include *Oldham Beyond* a mayor strategy for the Oldham district in Greater Manchester. This included a strategy for the entire district and demonstrator masterplans for the town centre, a terraced housing neighbourhood plus six smaller plans across the borough. More recently URBED has been working for 18 months on the *Selby Charter* and *Strategic Development Framework*. This is the last of Yorkshire Forward's Renaissance Towns which started with Alsop's Tuscan hill town in Barnsley. We have also worked extensively in Bradford first on a City Centre Design Guide and currently on one of the City's four Neighbourhood Development Frameworks.

**Masterplanning:** URBED's Manchester office has developed a speciality in masterplanning for private clients using outline planning applications. The first of these masterplans, the *New England Quarter* in Brighton for a consortium including Network Rail and Sainsbury's is now nearing completion on site. Other schemes include *Southall Gas Works* in West London, *Holbeck* in Leeds, *Temple Quay 2* in Bristol and *West Bar* in Sheffield. Together these schemes include just under 8,000 residential units in mixed-use urban developments. We were also responsible for the competition-winning scheme for the *Telford Millennium Community* which has since secured planning permission and are using the same techniques for masterplans in Housing Market Renewal Areas. These include a 1,300 home masterplan for Keepmoat in *Anfield*, Liverpool and a series of plans for BASE (a partnership between Barratts and Artisan) in *Rochdale*.

**Training:** URBED has been running design courses for the National Tenants Resource Centre and the Glasshouse Foundation for a number of years. We developed the Places by Design and the Homes by Design courses to teach tenants about masterplanning and housing design and have also run courses on sustainability, renewable energy and recycling. The initial three day residential courses have been developed into a course that can be run in local neighbourhoods.

**New settlements:** URBED has long had an interest in new settlements dating from the *Tircoed* project in south Wales when we were part of a joint venture developing a village in a forest. Since then we have worked on new settlements for *Shenley Hospital* in Hertsmere, *Cliveden Hospital* in Buckinghamshire for the National Trust and most recently the *East Ketley Millennium Community* in Telford.

## Drivers

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The new name for URBED in Manchester – Urbanism, Environment and Design reflects our core principles which remain:

1. **Urbanism:** Our work is rooted in the urban agenda, it is based on an understanding of the economics and viability of development and the wider policy context that is promoting development within towns at higher densities with a mix of uses.
2. **Community:** URBED's roots in Manchester come from the redevelopment of Hulme and the development of the Homes for Change Housing Cooperative. This commitment and belief in the power of communities informs all of our work. We have developed training and consultation techniques to involve local people in masterplanning with the National Tenants Resource Center. This has since evolved into a technique called Design for Change and is at the heart of all of our neighbourhood masterplanning work.
3. **Sustainability:** URBED has employed a specialist in urban sustainability for the last 10 years. Nicholas Dodd is a national expert on sustainable urban development having undertaken a wide range of research and consultancy work. We have been working with Igloo to develop their SRI policy and have developed sustainability strategies for a number of major masterplans.
4. **Design:** Community led, sustainable consultancies are not supposed to be design driven. However we do not see why radical design should be confined to those practices with no interest in these issues. URBED has been working for the last 7 or 8 years to become a design-driven masterplanning practice and have in that time won four developer design competitions against some of the leading architect practices in the UK.